

O 170914Z NOV 08  
FM AMCONSUL PESHAWAR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7733  
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE  
AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE  
AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE  
USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE  
NSC WASHINGTON DC  
CIA WASHDC  
SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC  
CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
CDR USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR

C O N F I D E N T I A L PESHAWAR 000513

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2018  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PK](#)  
SUBJECT: NWFP/FATA: SENIOR LOCAL OFFICIALS ON SECURITY CONDITIONS

REF: PESHAWAR 511 (NOTAL)

CLASSIFIED BY: Lynne M. Tracy, Principal Officer, U.S. Consulate  
Peshawar, Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (d)  
Summary  
-----

11. (C) In the wake of the killing of a USAID contractor, Principal Officer called on key senior local officials on November 13 to reinforce that the United States will stay engaged on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). Across the board, these officials viewed the attack as part of a broader effort to shake resolve and support for military operations in Bajaur that are putting pressure on militants. While all expressed a genuine desire to assist the Consulate's security situation, these promises may be hard to keep. The demand for security forces in Bajaur, Swat, and other hot spots has left areas around Peshawar, particularly Khyber Agency, vulnerable to militant encroachment as was the case earlier this year. The violence that spiked in Peshawar this past week with security forces struggling to keep up is a stark reminder of the challenge that Pakistan faces to clear and hold. End Summary.

Expressions of Support and Concern  
-----

12. (C) PO met separately with NWFP Chief Minister Hoti, Governor Ghani, 11th Corps Commander General Masood/11th Corps Chief of Staff Brigadier Aamer, and Inspector General Police Malik Naveed. All expressed horror at the killing of USAID contractor Stephen Vance on November 12 and urged increased caution in movements around Peshawar (see EAC reftel). CM Hoti asked that the Consulate consider co-locating office and residential space. PO explained that the Consulate was looking at this option (but did not mention post's interest in the Pearl Continental site). IG Naveed offered manpower in the University Town area and is working with the Consulate on strengthening security at key intersections where post residences are located. Brigadier Aamer said that the 11th Corps is reviewing "silent" support that it can provide to the University Town area. A visible military presence in the suburb, he added, would not be the right optic.

Spike in Violence -- Pressure from Militants  
-----

13. (C) Brigadier Aamer tied the spike in violence in Peshawar to militants who are under pressure in Bajaur. Governor Ghani ticked off recent acts of violence -- the September 22

kidnapping of the Afghan Consul General (and Ambassador-designate for Pakistan), the suicide bombing at Qayyum stadium on November 11, the killing of the USAID contractor on November 12, and the kidnapping of an Iranian diplomat on November 13 as indicators that operations in Bajaur are shaking things up. PO asked if there had been any progress in the Afghan CG's case. The Governor responded negatively and indicated that Pakistani authorities believe that the Afghan CG has been moved to Afghanistan.

¶4. (C) Ghani also mentioned the November 12 kidnapping of a female Canadian journalist on the outskirts of Bannu, heading toward Miramshah. The journalist was reportedly traveling in a hired vehicle in the company of two local support staff. Her companions were also taken. Ghani noted that the journalist did not have permission to travel to the tribal areas. According to press reports, the journalist is a convert to Islam who runs a website, Jihad Unspun, and was on freelance assignment for Al Jazeera. (Note: The Canadian Embassy is aware of the case.)

#### Bajaur and Mohmand

-----

¶5. (C) Operations in Bajaur are continuing, Ghani said, and initial forays into Mohmand (NFI) have begun. He commented that militants from Bajaur and Mohmand are moving into the settled districts around Peshawar and shaving their beards to blend in. (Note: According to NGO contacts, 5,000-7,000 IDPs from Mohmand have moved into Charsadda district, north of Peshawar.) The government, Ghani declared, was committed to maintaining sufficient force levels to keep the pressure on militants and wanted to move steadily south. PO asked about the government's hold strategy for Bajaur and other areas. There were no fixed force numbers yet, Ghani responded, but he estimated that approximately 60 percent of the Frontier Corps force that is now in Bajaur would be left in place to help maintain security.

#### Pulling Forces From Other Areas

-----

¶6. (C) The November 10 hijacking of containers in Khyber -- some carrying supplies for Coalition forces -- was an "embarrassment," the Governor continued. (Note: A number of local papers had carried a front page photo of militants standing on a humvee with signs indicating an association with Baitullah Mehsud's Tehrik-i Taliban.) Frontier Corps forces in Khyber, Ghani said, had been reduced to 50, based primarily inside Jamrud Fort. The remainder of FC personnel normally assigned to Khyber had been moved to support operations in Bajaur and Mohmand. Other FC forces had been considered (from on the border or the Waziristans), but these areas had missions that were also critical.

¶7. (C) The Frontier Corps, the Governor added, was short two wings (approximately 600 soldier per wing), and there had been calls to bring down the numbers in Bajaur -- a course the Governor said he has resisted. (Note: On November 15, Peshawar's Special Forces element reported that a wing of a Frontier Corps wing from the Khyber Rifles was assigned by the Political Agent to help provide security for NATO and wheat shipments passing through Khyber Agency. Frontier Corps is reportedly disgruntled because of it has pulled forces out of Bajaur and because of the feeling that transporters should hire security for these convoys.)

#### Mehsuds in Khyber

-----

¶8. (C) After the security troubles in Khyber during the spring and summer, the Political Agent, the Governor explained, had pitched the local criminal warlords Mangal Bagh and Haji Namdar (both with militant affiliations) against one another. Both groups had been weakened, but it had also opened the door, Ghani observed, for Baitullah Mehsud to make inroads into Khyber with his own people. PO asked why Shinwaris and Afridis were tolerating the presence of Mehsuds on their territory. "Money," the Governor stated flatly.

## Waziristanis Asking for Peace

---

¶9. (C) Elders from the Waziristans, the Governor said, were approaching him quietly and asking for peace. With sustained operations in Bajaur, community leaders, Ghani maintained, are seeing the handwriting on the wall -- and trying to avoid the same fate. (Comment: Conspicuously absent from his remarks on this topic was the impact of air strikes over the past several months of which he has been a vocal critic. End Comment.)

## Release of Baitullah Mehsud's Deputy

---

¶10. (C) Ghani assessed that the government was making progress in Orakzai with the help of lashkars (tribal militias) despite the toll of suicide attacks on local elders. PO asked about the reported early November release of Baitullah Mehsud's Orakzai-based deputy, Maulana Rafiuddin. (Note: Rafiuddin was picked up by police in July. The Maulana is reportedly close to Mehsud who instigated attacks and kidnappings against government targets to pressure for Rafiuddin's release.)

¶11. (C) The Governor confirmed that Rafiuddin had been set free in return for 10 kidnapped security forces personnel. The police should have just killed Rafiuddin, the Governor commented candidly. Once in custody, it was much more difficult "to deal" with him. PO began to raise the problems created by such a deal, but the Governor cut her off, saying flatly, "we did what needed to be done in this case." (Comment: The Governor was clearly uncomfortable with this topic. In contrast to PO's conversations with him in early mid-2008 where he played down prisoner exchanges in South Waziristan as low level and part of tribal collective responsibility, the Governor was very straightforward in describing the nature of the action. End Comment.)

## Comment

---

¶12. (C) Operations in Bajaur and Mohmand have likely left militants looking for targets of retaliation. And, with the drain in forces from Khyber -- and separately we hear that large numbers of police have been seconded to Swat and areas north and south of Peshawar recently -- the city and its immediate suburbs appear to be vulnerable again to militant/criminal activity where reduced presence of security forces emboldens these elements to act. The return of a high volume of violence to Peshawar after this summer's operations in Khyber Agency as well as the Governor's comments on post-kinetic plans for Bajaur underscore the lack of a clear, well-resourced and well-staffed "hold" plan for the FATA and areas of the NWFP.

TRACY